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Computers

OC OC

We.. were desperate. Our state of the art computer.. well it was state of the art back then.. used to calculate FTL jump routes had suffered a catastrophic failure. Admittedly we were even pushing its ability well beyond recommended parameters. You see we were in a hurry.

We were transporting vital medicine to one of the alliance member worlds, which was currently suffering from a massive plague that held the potential to wipe out the population. Time was of the essence, every second saved was a life gained. But with our computer down, we could only make small, hand calculated jumps. This would cost us valuable time, and even though we had allotted a [Month] of leeway, we desperately wished we didn't need it.

When we arrived in Sol, we were shocked when our radios came to life with signals coming from the world we now know as Earth. Radio signals meant, civilization! Civilization advanced enough to repair our computer! Hopefully. Our translator, Virerct, must have stayed up two whole rotations before coming up with a viable distress signal, and message explaining our situation. Which was impressive, even for her people. The Nal'vect were renown for their ability to decipher languages and codes, but even then it could take [weeks or months] of hard work.

When the humans responded, they directed us to a landing field in a dry, dusty region. The diplomats welcomed us and ushered us into a building while our translator helped bring the humans the massive texts that served as manuals to our computer and ship, so they could fabricate the parts specifically for our craft.

I could hardly believe our luck. Honestly, given how advanced the technology was, I had no idea they didn't have FTL when we landed. The satellites, the Tee Vees, the communicators? Were all so more advanced than anything I had ever seen. And honestly? I could care less that I handed them the secrets to FTL in a gift basket. For what happened next saved *billions*.

The humans had come up with a solution within days, they even helped our technician test it out to make sure it worked. I really wished Kylac had warned me though. When we finally got underway and had sent the command to make the jump... instead of the [Hours] of time it usually took... it was instant. Our ship jumped almost without warning, only a handful of the crew knowing what was about to happen, and grinned stupidly at me as I had fallen out of my chair.

Lucky for them I was too awestruck by what had just happened to do more than squeak out "wha.. what just happened?"

Kylac laughed at me then. He then said. "We jumped! We calculated a more efficient route than our old computer could ever dream of doing! And only in mere moments! These humans, they must be an ancient race or

something! I can scarcely imagine why we never met them before! They didn't just fix our computer, they upgraded it!"

"Sh-show me!" I demanded as I gathered my wits.

Let me tell you, I was not prepared for the sheer silence that greeted me in the computer bay. No clicking relays, no hum of vacuum tubes. Just a faint whirring that came from a tiny black box, sitting on a pedestal in the middle of the room. Only a screen so flat I could hardly believe it was a screen at all showed the status of everything it was hooked up to. I later learned the words in the casing had the words "powered by Raspberry Pi" etched into it. I didn't get the reference at the time, but I can see how it was humorous now.

When we arrived to Nictus 4, we were early, a whole [Month] early! We were both in awe, and a little terrified of that little black box. But we explained our early arrival on incredible luck and never elaborated. We were worried they might try and take our black box from us.. and we were terrified of breaking it. Besides, we had more important work to be done! If this gift helped us do it better, then I would protect it at all costs!

Which gave us a bit of a conundrum. If we went back to resupply now, questions would be asked delays would be made... lives lost. But I could not just wait around and do nothing! So we.. to borrow the human expression.."bit the bullet." And jumped home.

I shouldn't have worried so much. While our sudden and unexpected arrival shocked our border patrol, it never resulted in the loss of the black box. Oh sure they studied it, but they too were afraid to touch it, lest they damage the most powerful jump computer we had ever seen. They decided to keep us in drydock only long enough to conceal our early arrival, having classified the box as a 'state secret' until we could learn more. When I asked when we should do, as we still had to deliver more medicine, they told us to.. and I quote. "Find a place to hide out. That Earth place seems like a good spot, see if they can lend a hand while you are there."

When we Arrived back in Sol, we were greeted with a flurry of activity we hadn't noticed before. While we didn't see and ships before, and honestly should have thought about that fact when we landed, there were now several zipping around the inner system. We were greeted enthusiastically and asked how the computer was working out, and if there were any issues.

We told them it was working perfectly and well... we explained to them how we were instructed to lay low for a bit, a fact we weren't happy with, but had to comply.

They said they were sorry to hear that, but they had good news! Evidently they had talked our translator into getting them the formula for the medicine, as well as the location of Nictus 4.. as well as the codes to broadcast

to get past quarantine , and were days away from launching their first freighter, filled to the brim with medicine.

At first I had thought they meant first shipment, but I later discovered, that no.. this was in fact the first freighter they had ever built. Apparently all the other ships we detected with our radar were scientific in nature, including the "mobile foundry" that was currently mining asteroids to fuel the ships being built in the spacedock, I assumed.. wrongly again.. I may add... I just never saw before.

Being wrong about the humans had become something of a habit. But what did I know? I wasn't military. I'm a freighter captain with a mission to save lives.

They directed us to dock there this time. In which I got to marvel at the freighter, apparently being purpose built for this task, through the portholes on the bridge. It was.. simply massive. Stark white, with red "Crosses" and the phrase "Doctors without borders" emblazoned on the sides in galactic standard and in the local Dialect known as English, as well as a couple of others I didn't recognize.

"Behold our new Raphael class ship. A ship designed specifically to render [Humanitarian] Aide anywhere, and everywhere." They had said. "Would you like a tour?"

You can bet your mandibles I said YES.

That ship.. what I saw... Look, if you you saw the technology on that ship, you would have never believed they didn't have FTL before then. They copied our ships manuals, dissected the equations and reversed engineered so much of it they made improvements! We were only gone for 2-4 [years], accounting for relativity shenanigans. And they were already building more!

It wasn't until I was sitting in that ships lounge, the Enterprise was its name, that I learned it was their first ship to leave their solar system. Where they sat there and explained to me that the ships I saw on their Tee Vee were entirely fictional and had no basis in reality, aside from some interesting ideas that turned out to be true. I knew they were fiction mind you, but I has assumed they simply hadn't met anyone else yet and wrote stories about a future where they did.

The first thing they asked me after we finished that tour was. "Will you be in any sort of trouble for revealing the secrets of FTL to a civilization that didn't have it?" I was, understandably confused, but I said they worst the could do was fine me. I'm not a government agent and my own people discovered FTL by finding a crashed ship

on one of our moons. At the absolute worst, the Alliance may try to push my government to take my ship from me for a few [years].

"Well if it comes to that, we'll just build you a new one, and you can fly with us... think of it as a thank you for letting us study your manuals." They had stated with a smile.

My confusion became shock as it registered and they gave me a moment to recover before they could elaborate.

"You see, FTL kind of a tricky thing to do, we had the math and equations mostly right, but were were missing a few details. Oh sure in a few more decades we may have cracked it, and the other tech such as artificial gravity, but this helped us find the missing pieces so we could do it sooner. We were a bit appalled how primitive the tech to achieve it was, honestly."

"But your technology is so advanced!" I exclaimed, still having trouble understanding how they did not have FTL yet.

The woman, Captain Nora as she preferred to be called, simply shrugged. "I'm guessing most races didn't try to develop computers and data networks as we did. You all never did see the benefit of making computers smaller, nor probably making them available to the average citizen, right?"

I had nodded numbly in response. Computers were almost always seen as something only for scientists and military, or for larger applications. Making them smaller, faster, and more powerful was never really a driving need. Just build a bigger one, was the usual response.

"Since we figure word is gonna get out about us soon, we might as well put our best foot forward, and save some lives." Captain Nora then added. "You want to come with?"

I had single-handedly unleashed the most technologically advanced race upon the galaxy. And you know what I said? I said YES! And I have never regretted it since. We saved so many countless lives since then with their help and I refuse to believe that was a bad thing. And you know what? I think we can save countless more.

-Captain Vr'Ikti, To the Galactic Alliance on the recommendation of allowing humanity to join as a member race.